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SOURCE Ch'uan-wei, No 6, 1949.

THE PROSPECT OF AN UNPRECEDENTED FAMINE IN CHINA

On the evidence of data systematically gathered by more than a score of competent investigators, the accuracy of whose facts is unquestionable, China faces an unprecedented severe and extensive famine. This is mainly attributable to the exhaustion of the war years, and the interruption of normal agricultural production directly and indirectly, by the current civil war. It will appear first and most acutely in the central plains part of the country wherein most of the great centers of population are found. Even the provinces which usually export grains to deficiency areas, such as Hunan, will have barely enough to feed themselves.

If the uninterrupted supply of 30,000 to 35,000 tons of food required monthly by the Pei-p'ing and T'ien-ching area, ordinarily obtained from the South and from abroad, is not maintained, a food crisis will begin in that area in May.

Shanghai with its population of more than 5 million had to have over 50,000 tons of rice, flour, and other foods per month. For the past few months it has been relying on American RCA relief supplies, but these are to stop in June. Even though a small portion may be purchased from abroad, there still exists an alarmingly great deficiency.

According to the average for the past 10 years, the seven provinces of Kiangsu, Chekiang, Fukien, Kwangtung, Anhwei, Honan and Szechuan have in the aggregate a monthly shortage of 200,000 tons of food grains. Such a deficiency, aggravated as it is by continuing military strife, may lead to large-scale food riots, and cause the starvation of as many as 8 million people.

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